

# Utah County Birders Newsletter

February 2014

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## FEBRUARY MEETING:

**Thursday, February 13th, 2014 - 7:00 PM**

### **Museum of Ancient Life at Thanksgiving Point**

Our February meeting will be a tour of the Museum of Ancient Life at Thanksgiving Point. We will meet in the lobby at 6:45pm for a quick meeting and go from there. Museum entry is \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors. 2929 North Thanksgiving Way, Lehi.

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## FIELD TRIPS:

**8 February, 2014 (Sat): Wasatch County** - This month we will continue working on the UCB Challenge and be birding Wasatch County. We will start around Deer Creek, then work our way through town towards the Jordanelle Wetlands. Date: Feb 8, 2014 - Meeting Time: 8 AM - Place: Parking area behind Will's Pitt Stop at the mouth of Provo Canyon (800 North, Orem)

Some Other Events of note: (not official UCB Trips)

Feb 8th is Bald Eagle Day by the Division of Wildlife Resources. There are 5 locations: Salt Creek WMA, Farmington BAY WMA, Fountain Green Fish Hatchery, Dinosaur NM, and Rush Lake. Times and events vary by location.

<http://wildlife.utah.gov/wildlife-news/1344-bald-eagle-day-feb-8.html>

Delta Snow Goose Festival is being held Feb 21-22 this year. Besides seeing thousands of Snow and Ross's Geese,

there is all kinds of events like a 10K or a swim in Gunnison Bend Reservoir.

<http://deltagoosefestival.com/>

Keeli is leading a birding snowshoe walk for the Stokes Nature Center in Logan Feb 22 at 10am. I will be driving up there that morning if anyone wants to go with me, and we can bird the area around Logan after the walk. There will be a small fee for the snow shoe, but it'll be less than \$10. Email or call keeli privately if interested.

We are actively recruiting people to lead local half-day field trips, any time, any place. If you would like to lead a field trip or if you have any ideas for this year's field trips, please contact Bryan Shirley at - [bt\\_shirley@hotmail.com](mailto:bt_shirley@hotmail.com)

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## Captain's Log

by Keeli Marvel

Birds are uniquely adapted to live the lives they live, and within the bird world there is an huge amount of variation that even further allows bird species to thrive in unique environmental niches. Flight is an incredibly energy expensive activity, so flighted birds have a number of adaptations that allow them to do it as efficiently as possible. Bird bones are hollow, greatly reducing the weight of the skeleton. Bird skulls have much larger eye sockets and smaller jaws than other vertebrate groups which helps lighten the overall mass of the skull.

Bird respiratory systems are also uniquely adapted to flight. Birds have extra air sacs in addition to their lungs that allow them to maximize the diffusion of oxygen into the bloodstream. This is one of the things that allow birds' respiratory system to work much more efficiently at higher altitudes than most mammals, making high altitude migration possible. In fact, some species of geese, ducks, and cranes even migrate over the top of the Himalayas. It's quite incredible when you think about it. Birds also have what is referred to as a one-way breathing respiratory system which means air only flows in one direction through the lungs. They take air in through one set of air sacs. It passes through the lungs, through another set of air sacs, and then is exhaled, which means there is a constant flow of fresh air and oxygen through the lungs where the oxygen absorption takes place.

Bird feathers are made of keratin – the same substance that makes up our hair and fingernails. It is thought that feathers evolved as insulation but now also serve a number of different roles. Most importantly they are light enough and strong enough they provide lift and maneuvering control in bird flight. They also streamline the bird body and provide waterproof insulation. Colors on the feathers may provide camouflage – or just the opposite – dazzling displays used to attract mates.

Many bird species are so well adapted for flight that they travel tens of thousands of miles per year during migration. The Arctic Tern holds the record for the longest distance migration – traveling 44,000 miles from Greenland in the Arctic all the way to Antarctica and back every year. This adds up to 1.5 million miles in an individual bird's lifetime. Can you imagine all the frequent flier miles you could accrue with that kind of travel?! The Wandering Albatross has the largest wingspan of any living species and is so well adapted to flight it spends almost its entire life in flight, only landing on the ocean to feed, and returning to land once every two years to breed. A species we're a little more familiar with – the Eared Grebe – using the Great Salt Lake and other saline western lakes as staging grounds for migration – goes through a complete body transformation every year. Their flight muscles atrophy and they eat so much they actually double their body weight to the point that they can no longer fly. When migration time nears (when the brine shrimp/fly food supply runs out) they must regain enough flight muscle and trim down to the point that they can fly again.

Many species of flightless birds like penguins no longer fly in the air, but have adapted to be equally adept at “flying” in the water. Other species such as the northern hemisphere ecological equivalent of penguins – the puffins, auks, and murrelets, still retain the ability to fly in the air, but are also exceptional at “flying” underwater and can dive to depths over 600 feet deep.

I could really go on forever about things that make bird flight unique. If you are interested in reading more, I got most of the information for this month's article from *The Firefly Encyclopedia of Birds*, edited by Christopher Perrins, *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* by David Allen Sibley, and from Wikipedia.

Keeli Marvel, President – Utah County Birders

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## A BIRDING ICON IS LAID TO REST

by Pat Jividen

Stephen Carr, MD, passed away very suddenly Friday, January 17, 2014. For those of you who have been birders for a long time, you probably knew Steve. For those of you who are new to birding, his story is memorable.

When Steve was twelve years old, he already had his eye set on getting his Eagle Scout Award. He decided to get a birding merit badge, and he was hooked! He was a birder for ever after. He received his Eagle Award when he was fourteen years old. If you went to his funeral, you would have seen his Boy Scout shirt on display, with every space filled with merit badges. As well as being a birder for life, he was a scouter in one way or another: ward scout master, stake scout master, etc., and received his Silver Beaver Award.

After high school, he served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps participating in the Atomic Bomb testing in southern Nevada. When he was through with the army, he came home and went on a two year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, serving in the "Central States". After his mission, he married his high school sweetheart, Ruth Fetzer. They started married life with school, attending the University of Utah graduating in Biology with an emphasis in --- you guessed it --- Ornithology. Then, it was off to Washington D.C. where he completed his medical degree and then home to the U. of U. for his internship and residency. He then practiced Pediatrics for thirty years (of course birding in between everything else).

I first went birding with Steve to Lytle Ranch in 2001 to see the elf owl (with no luck). In 2007, we went birding a lot as he finished his hunt to find over 100 birds in all 29 counties in Utah (with success). As we birded over the years, Steve was able to add seven new birds to his Utah list and I added thirty-two to mine.

Steve's wit and humor will be sorely missed. In addition to the above, he was a wood carver, carving birds to the exact size, color and shape as the real ones.

He was also a ghost town buff and an expert in railroads. In fact, he wrote several books on the subjects. He had many other interests and activities, serving on various corporate boards and committees. He has widely traveled for his church and for birding. He was involved with the beginnings of the Heber Creeper and, in his spare time, he was a volunteer train conductor. These are just a few of his accomplishments and interests.

The following is a list of the birds he has seen:

Over 100 birds in each Utah County  
Yard - 92  
Total for Utah - 381  
ABA birds - 669  
Worldwide - 2,780

Steve was a great friend to me and others, a good husband, father, brother, neighbor and any others you might name.

Til we meet again... farewell.

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Below is a list of just of few of Steve's contributions to the Utah Birding Community.

- He was President of the Utah Ornithological Society. He served on the board of directors working hard to organize past UOS Conferences and was the UOS Field Trip Coordinator.
- He served as Secretary of the Utah Bird Records Committee.
- He was on the board of directors of the Salt Lake Birders.
- With recommendations from the Utah birding community, he was chosen to serve as Field Trip Coordinator for the 2008 ABA Convention at Snowbird.
- He gave presentations to local bird groups, such as at our Utah County Birders Meetings - "Birds of the Bible" (June 2005), Birding Salt Lake County (Mar 2007) and "Birding in Antarctica" (Nov 2012).
- and of course his general camaraderie out in the field birding with us.

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## Bird of the Month

### Blue Jay

*Cyanocitta cristata*

by Mabelle Johnson

We've had a treat here in Utah County for the past few months. A Blue Jay has been frequenting a neighborhood in Santaquin! John Gunderson, who lives in the neighborhood and has several bird feeders in his yard, noticed the Blue Jay and alerted others about it. Since late November, John says he's had close to 100 people visit his home to see the Blue Jay. Sheryl and I were able to go early in January. John was so generous to let us come in and wait for it to show up, which it did right away, but only for a few seconds. It flew into the top of a tree in the yard, but flew off again. We stayed, waiting and watching for another glimpse, hoping it would come to the feeder on the deck so we could get a good look at the beautiful wing and tail patterns, not to mention the beautiful Cyan (blue) color! We did get another glimpse, but not at the feeder. We had to leave, but we were excited to have seen it even briefly.

I recently acquired Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion and will use it extensively in the articles I write this year.

Pete Dunne has nicknamed the Blue Jay 'Noisy Coxcomb', he describes it as noisy, boisterous, assertive, and social. Of the Blue Jays vocalizations, he says, "Wonderfully varied. Classic call is a loud brassy 'Jay Jay Jay' that is often repeated and sometimes held: 'Jaaaay.'" Calls also include a 'squeaky door' call, low soft murmurings, and a low flat rattle. It is also an accomplished mimic, specializing in the calls of Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks. It is quick to respond and often the first instigator of mobbing actions, whether directed toward hawks, owls, cats, snakes, foxes, humans...and sometimes nothing at all!

Dunne describes the Blue Jay as handsome, rakish, and unmistakable. (Sounds like he has a crush on this bird...) He calls it a curiously shaped bird that looks like it was assembled from leftover parts: long wedge-shaped head, short paddle-like wings, long, narrow, ovate, slightly wilted tail. Flight is generally straight and somewhat jerky. Sometimes undulates and glides or brakes on open wings. Lands with a flourish - a rapid, floating, undulating, show-offish approach to the perch.

It is a prominent and permanent resident across the East and Central United States and in Canada, West to British Columbia. It is found, in pockets, in all states except California, Nevada, Arizona and all but in Northern Utah. He rates this as a V3: This species has demonstrated an established, widespread pattern of vagrancy. Ignore the range descriptions. This bird could be sighted almost anywhere. Here in Utah, Blue Jays have been reported in Cache Valley, Vernal and Bountiful in the past few months, as well as the Santaquin bird.

Hopefully you will all get a chance to see it in Utah County.

If you would like to write an article for the Bird of the Month, please contact Mabelle (new Bird of the Month Coordinator!) - mabelle13johnson@yahoo.com



photo by Carlos Caceres

Carlos took this photo at John Gunderson's house on Nov 30, 2013

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## Field Trip Report

### S. Utah County Winter Duck Field Trip - 11 January 2014

by Keeli Marvel

Fourteen birders met on Saturday for our first UCB field trip of the new year. We visited East Bay Golf Course Ponds, the Flow Serve complex, Salem fields, Salem Pond, and East Santaquin.

Highlights of the field trip were 13 duck species including Common and Hooded Mergansers on Salem Pond, Black-crowned Night Heron on the island at East Bay Golf Course in Provo, Lewis's Woodpeckers in Salem and Santaquin, and the Blue Jay that has been previously reported in East Santaquin. Thanks to John Gunderson for letting us invade his house to wait for the Blue Jay to make an appearance. It was good to see some new faces on the trip! Complete lists of species observed below. We finished with 39 total species for the day, which satisfies the Utah County requirement for the Utah County Birders 2014 Birding Challenge. More information on the challenge can be found on our January newsletter here:

<http://www.utahbirds.org/ucb/2014BirdingChallenge.pdf>

Happy Birding!

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#### East Bay Golf Course

Canada Goose 20  
Gadwall 6  
American Wigeon 40  
Mallard 30  
Mallard (Domestic type) 30  
Northern Shoveler 30  
Northern Pintail 10  
Green-winged Teal 5  
Ring-necked Duck 3  
Pied-billed Grebe 3  
Black-crowned Night-Heron 2 They are common year round on the island on the east side of East Bay Golf Course  
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1  
Red-tailed Hawk 1  
American Coot 50  
Northern Flicker 3  
Merlin 1  
Black-billed Magpie 5  
American Robin 1  
European Starling 10  
Great-tailed Grackle 10

#### FlowsERVE Ponds

Canada Goose 200  
Gadwall 2  
American Wigeon 4  
Mallard 10  
Mallard (Domestic type) 20  
Red-tailed Hawk 2  
Belted Kingfisher 1  
American Kestrel 1  
Brewer's Blackbird 10

#### East Salem (Utah Co.) (incl. Lewis' Woodpecker hangout)

Lewis's Woodpecker 4 Common locally in winter along scrub oak forested area at this location. Documented for several years at same location in the winter.  
Spotted Towhee 3  
House Sparrow 10

#### Salem Pond

Canada Goose 100  
Mute Swan 1 Domestic - not a wild bird  
Gadwall 6  
American Wigeon 4  
Mallard 20  
Mallard (Domestic type) 25  
Northern Shoveler 50  
Green-winged Teal 2  
Canvasback 1  
Ring-necked Duck 2  
Lesser Scaup 5  
Bufflehead 1  
Common Goldeneye 20  
Hooded Merganser 1  
Common Merganser 10  
Pied-billed Grebe 3  
American Coot 20  
Belted Kingfisher 1  
Northern Flicker 1  
Song Sparrow 1

#### East Santaquin Neighborhood

Eurasian Collared-Dove 10  
Lewis's Woodpecker 1 Observed on power pole in neighborhood.  
Steller's Jay 6  
Blue Jay 1 Bird originally reported by Jon Gunderson coming in to his feeders and has been observed in the neighborhood for several months now.  
Western Scrub-Jay 5  
Black-billed Magpie 3  
American Robin 1  
House Finch 20  
American Goldfinch 6

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## Field Trip Report

**Salt Lake County** - 18 January 2014

by Bryan Shirley

Getting a good start to the Utah Caounty Birders Challenge, 17 birders covered Salt Lake County. We started at Lee Kay Ponds at a bit after 8 AM and couldn't find a bird besides a few starlings. Eventually we saw one Red-Tailed Hawk, but not a gull to be found there.

Our next stop was at Lake Park. There was a couple hundred gulls just behind the club house on the gold course. We found Herring, California, and Ring-billed here. The best bird though was a Snow Goose wandering around the fairway in a flock of Canada Geese.

At Decker Lake we had the same 3 species of gulls and a good mix of common waterfowl. We also birded at the Sandy Pond and along the Jordan River just off 100th South and picked up some more waterfowl like Ring-necked, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, etc.

We also had a Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Bald Eagles flying around here. We ended up with 38 species total and had a good morning around SLC. We'll try to bird a couple more counties next month!

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## Backyard Bird of the Month

January 2014

Jack Binch - Sandy

I have eight **Yellow-rump Warblers** at home. Never get tired of watching them. They are already starting to get breeding colors.

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

I was pleased to come home from work and see a lone **Pine Siskin** foraging on the ground below one of my feeders during the last week of the month.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

I enjoy the **Dark-eyed Juncos** while they are here. In January I had Oregon, Pink-sided and Slate Colored.

Milt Moody - Provo

A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** actually showing his crown.

Dennis Shirley - Elk Ridge

A mature female **Sharp-shinned Hawk** carrying away one of our Dark-eyed Junco on Jan. 30,2014.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

A single **Steller's Jay** came for several days.

Report your favorite backyard bird each month to Eric Huish at 801-360-8777 or erichuish@gmail.com

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## The Utah County Birders Newsletter is now online only/mostly.

If you would like an email notice each month when the Newsletter is posted online please send an email to Eric Huish at [erichuish@gmail.com](mailto:erichuish@gmail.com) or subscribe to the ucbbnet mailing list. To subscribe to ucbbnet just send an e-mail to [ucbbnet-subscribe@utahbirds.org](mailto:ucbbnet-subscribe@utahbirds.org)

We are printing the online version of the newsletter and mailing it out to anyone who still wants a paper copy or who doesn't have internet access. If you know of anyone who enjoys the UCB Newsletter but doesn't have internet access please let Eric Huish or Keeli Marvel know and we will make sure they get a copy.

